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Federal Funding for Plum Pox Control Program

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Report Highlights: Canada has announced a C\$40 million program to assist the provinces of Ontario and Nova Scotia with the control and eradication of Plum Pox, a serious plant disease affecting the tender fruit and nursery industries. The disease was first detected in Canada last year. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency has developed a comprehensive three-year plan with the province of Ontario and the industry to manage and control the disease.

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The Canadian government has announced a C\$40 million program to assist the provinces of Ontario and Nova Scotia with the control and eradication of Plum Pox, a serious plant disease affecting the tender fruit and nursery industries. The disease was first detected in Canada last year. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency has developed a comprehensive three-year plan with the province of Ontario and the industry to manage and control the disease. Federal regulations have been passed to permit compensation to growers for trees ordered destroyed.

The text of the press release from Agriculture and Agr-Food Canada follows:

VINELAND, Ont., June 21, 2001 – The Government of Canada is investing almost \$40 million over the next three years to help the tender fruit and nursery industries respond to the challenges of Plum Pox Virus (PPV).

PPV is not a threat to human or animal health. It is, however, a serious plant disease affecting tender fruit and ornamental varieties. The disease, first detected in areas of Ontario and Nova Scotia in 2000, infects the trees and can drastically reduce yields.

An immediate response by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) in Ontario and Nova Scotia led to major testing, surveying and removal of infected trees in both provinces. Since the Nova Scotia outbreak was localized, trees were removed and the situation continues to be closely monitored.

An innovative and comprehensive three-year plan has been developed with the Province of Ontario and the industry to manage and control the disease to maintain the viability of Canada's multi-million dollar tender fruit industry. The Government of Canada has committed \$39.9 million towards this plan. The plan's goals are to contain and, if possible, eradicate the disease by sampling, testing and removing trees where necessary, conducting scientific research, training producers and developing a certification program for replacement trees. Progress will be assessed each year, with a major evaluation to be completed after three years. While the plan will focus on Ontario, it will benefit growers across the country.

"This program, developed in consultation with the provinces and the industry, utilizes the best scientific approach," said Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Lyle Vanclief. "It will build on steps already taken last fall and will help ensure the long term viability of this important and irreplaceable sector of Canada's agri-food industry."

The plan will be delivered through a federal-provincial-industry partnership, with the province and industry committing resources to its work.

"Ontario's 600 tender fruit growers are pleased to work with government on this program," said Len Troup, Chairman of the Ontario Tender Fruit Producers' Marketing Board. "By coordinating our response, we believe we can now eradicate this virus from Ontario with the least amount of disruption to the industry." Ontario, with funding from the federal government, will conduct an annual detection survey, sharing the costs and working with the industry to train growers to identify infected trees and develop protocols for a

certification program.

The CFIA will move to eradicate the disease from isolated areas in Ontario and Nova Scotia, contain and remove infected trees in the Niagara Region and will continue an aggressive sampling and testing program across Canada.

An extensive research program, including the susceptibility and possible infection of ornamentals, native and backyard plants to this disease, will be undertaken at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada research facilities in Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia and at CFIA plant testing centres.

The Government of Canada is committed to helping the tender fruit and nursery producers affected by this disease. Negotiations continue with Ontario and Nova Scotia on an additional financial assistance program for affected tender fruit growers and commercial nursery operators.

End official press release.

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